

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

The First 50 Years



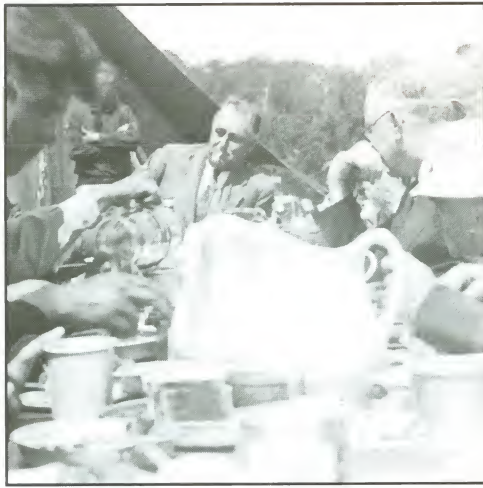


Front cover — The Blue Ridge Parkway rides along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains for 355 miles before winding along the top of the more rugged Black, Great Craggy (cover photo), Plott Balsam and Great Balsam mountains for a total of 469 miles.

Above — The Old Pisgah Inn, a rustic structure built in 1919, though no longer used as an inn is still an interesting place to visit. Many log beams and posts still have their bark attached. The views from its porch are spectacular.



All seasons, particularly winter, entice the traveler to participate in recreational activities. Driving, even in winter is permissible on much of the Parkway. The closed sections are closed only to motor vehicles. Hiking, cross country skiing, and sledding are only a few of the winter sports enjoyed on the Parkway. Here in the Moses Cone Memorial Park there are 26 miles of carriage trail which may be enjoyed in any season.



President Roosevelt at dedication of Skyline Drive. Possible origin of Blue Ridge Parkway idea. Franklin D. Roosevelt later signed the Act which established the Parkway.

For fifty years the Blue Ridge Parkway has been making history as a public works project and as a public recreational facility. It is now truly a great national playground and a magnificent national resource. Indeed, it was recently aptly described as "A great institution, superbly managed, which is bringing pleasure, education, physical, mental, and spiritual renewal to the people of America."

Ensnared within those fifty years are intriguing tales — tales of men with vision, daring plans, unique innovations, and bold actions. The premier tale is that of courageous, concerned men coping with the world's greatest depression by establishing the world's most unique recreational unit — the Blue Ridge Parkway.

SOMETHING HISTORICAL

In order to really appreciate how the Blue Ridge Parkway came into being, it is necessary to do a historical "instant replay." For more than a half century there had been enthusiastic and diligent efforts to get portions of the vast and beautiful forests in the Southern High-

lands set aside as "The Southern Appalachian National Park." For a variety of reasons, including the greed of the timber barons, such a park never materialized. Instead, a number of national forests were established, including "The Pisgah." Yet the dream of a great eastern national park would not die, and finally, after much delay, there came, 1928 - 1933, not one but two eastern national parks — the Shenandoah and the Great Smoky Mountains. The former was formed out of land donated by Virginia, the latter out of land donated by North Carolina and Tennessee. To make the Shenandoah Park more accessible, a highway was built along the crest of the ridge. That highway quickly became known as "The Skyline Drive." One of the chief sponsors of the park and drive was Virginia's Governor Harry F. Byrd. To secure funding for the highway he capitalized on the then recent trans-Atlantic flight of Charles A. Lindbergh and told the Virginia General Assembly that "A Skyline Drive will be built along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains, forming a wonderway over which the tourist will ride comfortably in his car while he is stirred by a view as exhilarating as the aviator may see from his plane."

To add a personal touch to "romance and history," stop at any overlook on the Parkway and let your mind pose this question: "Who passed this way?" Immediately in reply can come an almost unbelievable procession: buffaloes and bears, drovers and hogs, warriors and scalps, railroad and canal builders, timber cutters and log trains, stage coaches and freight wagons, hikers and hunters, politicians and pioneers, bulldozers and landscape architects, real estate dealers and second-home seekers, and, of course, you.

Very few things in the field of public recreation have ever evoked as much excitement, concern, support and constant outright championing by politicians, citizens, counties, towns, chambers of commerce, and rural communities as the Blue Ridge Parkway. Indeed, from the first press release to the most current media coverage the Parkway has elicited a dynamic esprit de corps previously foreign to the very diverse communities through which it runs. Out of this spirit has risen an unparalleled sense of common community pride — a pride which uniquely binds its 470 mile sweep through two states into a remarkable E PLURIBUS UNUM — "ONE OUT OF MANY."

A typical view from the Parkway which gives the motorist the feeling that he is above the mountains.



But Governor Byrd was not the first to seek funding for a highway along the crest of the Blue Ridge. As a matter of fact, two decades prior to his efforts a group of entrepreneurs in North Carolina had laid out what they called "The Crest of the Blue Ridge Highway" and had actually begun construction. Their idea — which is the earliest known prototype for the Blue Ridge Parkway — was to construct a toll road, for leisure traffic only, from Marion, Virginia to Tallulah Falls, Georgia, with inns and motor services along the way. The prime mover of the project, Joseph Hyde Pratt, was as gifted as Governor Byrd in boosting it: "It is destined to be one of the greatest scenic roads in America, surpassing anything in the East and rivaling those in Yosemite Valley and the Yellowstone National Park."

Ironically, one world wide disaster killed Pratt's dream and a second greatly expanded Byrd's. World War I liquidated "The Crest of the Blue Ridge Highway" in its infancy.

And the Great Depression provided the opportunity for its successor, the Blue Ridge Parkway.

But in the meantime, there came a third proposal for a scenic highway in the East. Kentucky Congressman Maurice H. Thatcher in 1930 proposed a federal park-to-park highway which would link Washington, D.C., with all the major national parks in the east. An Eastern National Park-to-Park Association was formed to promote the idea. But, to Thatcher's chagrin, his project fell victim to one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's make-work programs under the National Industrial Recovery Act.

That act was one of the many rapidly drawn up under the New Deal to cope with mass unemployment and economic hard times. Title II of that act, June 16, 1933, created a Public Works Administration with a \$3.3 billion budget to provide relief employment. The Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, was designated administrator.

SOMETHING CLAIMED

It was with this authorization, this funding, and this administrator that the Blue Ridge Parkway, a Depression baby, entered into the world. But, as was the case with so many babies during that period, its parentage is, to say the least, uncertain. There is no shortage of claimants for that honor. Among the the front runners, however, are two men who till their dying day adamantly declared, "I am the man. I did it!" — Harry F. Byrd and Theodore E. Straus. Byrd had moved up from the Virginia Governor's office to that of United States Senator. He and a strong contingency of supporters claim that on August 11, 1933, while he was hosting President Franklin D. Roosevelt at a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in the Shenandoah National Park, he proposed that the very popular Skyline Drive be extended to link the Shenandoah and the Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. The result would be two-fold — a magnificent scenic highway and thousands of jobs for the unemployed. According to Byrd, the President immediately warmed to the idea, even suggesting that the project should start at the Canadian border and run down the ridges all the way to Georgia. "Take it up with Ickes," the President told Byrd, implying that he would support it, according to the Senator.

Straus and his supporters flatly deny Byrd's claim. Straus, with an office in Baltimore, Maryland, was at that time an advisor for District No. 10, Public Works Administration. He, most tenaciously, has contended that on September 22, 1933, at a Public Works Administration planning meeting in Richmond, Virginia, with Governor John G. Pollard, Senator Byrd, and others, the Parkway idea was proposed by him:

"It was through my suggestion to Governor Pollard that the creation of the Parkway came into existence."

Perhaps so. This much is well documented: on September 23, 1933, the day after Straus claims he proposed the Parkway, Governor Pollard appointed Byrd chairman of a Virginia committee to seek federal aid for construction of a scenic highway linking Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, thereby providing thousands of new jobs.

PATRONS ARE REQUESTED TO FAVOR THE COMPANY BY CRITICISM AND SUGGESTION CONCERNING ITS SERVICE		12208
CLASS OF SERVICE This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable sign above or preceding the address.	WESTERN UNION <small>NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT J. C. WILVER, PRESIDENT-ELECT</small>	SIGNS DL = Day Letter NM = Night Message NL = Night Letter LCO = Deferred Cable NLT = Cable Night Letter WLT = Week-End Letter
<small>The filing time as shown in the date line on full-rate telegrams and day letters, and the time of receipt at destination as shown on all messages, is STANDARD TIME.</small>		
Received at CFB291 166 GOVT SN WASHINGTON DC 7 149P	1933 OCT 7 PM 2 39	MINUTES IN TRANSIT FULL-RATE DAY LETTER
HON J C B EHRINGHAUS= GOVERNOR OF NORTHCAROLINA RALEIGH NCAR=		
JUST HAD A TALK WITH THE PRESIDENT WITH RESPECT TO THE CONSTRUCTION OUT OF FEDERAL FUNDS OF A SCENIC HIGHWAY CONNECTING THE SHENANDOAH AND GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAIN PARKS STOP PLAN IS TO FINANCE FROM FEDERAL WORKS PROGRAM WITHOUT OBLIGATION ON THE PART OF THE STATES EXCEPT AS TO MAINTENANCE OF ROAD STOP THIS MAINTENANCE CAN BE READILY GIVEN BY THE STATES BY REASON OF THE LARGE AMOUNT OF INCREASED GASOLINE TAX DERIVED FROM THE TOURISTS ATTRACTED TO THIS ROAD STOP THE PRESIDENT SUGGESTS A SMALL TOLL SO AS TO MAKE THIS A SELF LIQUIDATING ENTERPRISE STOP TENTATIVE SURVEY INDICATES A DISTANCE OF FOUR HUNDRED MILES TOTAL COST SIXTEEN MILLION DOLLARS STOP HUNDRED SEVENTY FIVE MILES IN VIRGINIA HUNDRED FORTY MILES IN NORTHCAROLINA AND NINETY FIVE MILES IN TENNESSEE STOP THIS ROAD WILL BE THE GREATEST SCENIC ROAD IN THE WORLD AND WILL ATTRACT MILLIONS OF TOURISTS STOP I ASK YOUR COOPERATION IN THE PROJECT AND IF YOU APPROVE WOULD APPRECIATE A TELEGRAM TO SECRETARY ICKES= HARRY F BYRD.		
THE QUICKEST, SUREST AND SAFEST WAY TO SEND MONEY IS BY TELEGRAM OR CABLE		

Senator Byrd's initial telegram to the governors of the states of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.



Flowering Dogwood



Fire Pink

Spring wildflowers are for many the attraction and the excuse to get out of the house or break the winter blahs. The Blue Ridge Parkway has one of the largest varieties of wildflowers found anywhere in the world. Traversing several hundred miles in latitude and over 6,000 feet in elevation, gives the Parkway the enviable situation of having the same flower in bloom for an extended time.

The Flowering Dogwood is probably one of the most popular of the early wildflowers. Dogwoods add a brightness to the forest which is just beginning to get its new spring leaves. Fire Pink adds a spark of brilliant red color to many of the Parkway's rocky areas. The Trillium with its simple three part patterns and the Rhododendron with its dense clusters of flowers surrounded by deep green leathery leaves offer some of the extremes of beauty available in flowers of similar color.

Catawba Rhododendron



Trillium



SOMETHING DECISIVE

It was that appointment which gave viability to the project. Both Byrd and Pollard posted telegrams to the governors of North Carolina and Tennessee, informing them of the proposal and soliciting their immediate support. Byrd told the two governors that he had the President's support, that Federal Public Works funding would be used, and that the President had suggested a small toll to help defray costs. As a sweetener, he indicated that Virginia's share of mileage would be 175, North Carolina's 140, and Tennessee's 95. Moreover, he prophetically declared, "This road will be the greatest scenic road in the world and will attract millions."

Such an unexpected economic bonanza warranted and received support by both states, albeit North Carolina was leery of the toll aspect. Nevertheless, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee, keenly aware of urgent needs for boosting employment and tourism opportunities, selected a blue-ribbon park-to-park highway committee, composed of senators, congressmen, highway commissioners, and similarly influential persons.

At Byrd's bidding, those men met in Washington, D. C., October 17, 1933, with key representatives from the Public Works Administration, the Bureau of Public Roads, and the National Park Service. And out of that initial meeting and immediate follow-ups there came several land-mark Parkway decisions.

1. The project would be totally funded with Public Works administration money, thereby eliminating tolls.
2. The scenic highway was officially designated a *parkway*.
3. It would be a unit in the National Park System.
4. The states would acquire and donate the required right-of-way. In return, the federal government would design, construct and maintain the Parkway.
5. \$16,000,000 would be requested to finance a projected 414 miles of road and provide employment for four thousand men.

These decisions, under Secretary Ickes' strong support and Byrd's able guidance, climaxed on December 19, 1933, with a \$4,000,000 appropriation from Public Works Administration funds. Thus, in less than ninety days what is now known as the Blue Ridge Parkway was conceived and birthed.

SOMETHING CONTROVERSIAL

At this point widespread excitement entered the story. To a region very economically depressed, grossly by-passed by the American industrial revolution, and sadly lacking the transportation facilities, the proposed parkway promised a totally new lease on life. And, obvi-

ously, the area through which the road ran would be the major beneficiary. Therefore, there came a mad scramble, with interested parties in three states loudly crying, "RUN IT OUR WAY!"

The question of route location became very hectic, and triggered three major battles. The first came when Secretary Ickes decided to hold hearings to permit each state an opportunity to select and defend its preferred route. Little did he know what a Pandora's box he was opening.

Two separate hearings were held, one in Baltimore, Maryland, February 5-7, 1934, and a second in Washington, D.C., September 18, 1934. Few, if any, of the public works projects in our entire history generated as much interest and acrimonious wrangling. At stake were many jobs, much construction money, and millions of tourist dollars. To secure a lion's share of them, both North Carolina and Tennessee enlisted every possible resource and available influence, even reaching into the White House for support.

North Carolina's proposed route would have picked up the Parkway at the Virginia border, near Fancy Gap, and continued to Blowing Rock, Grandfather Mountain, Linville Falls, Mount Mitchell, Mount Pisgah, and via Cherokee into the Great Smokies. This would have richly benefitted the city of Asheville but totally deprived Tennessee of any parkway mileage.

THE WEATHER
THE ASHEVILLE CITIZEN'S
 WEATHER SERVICE
 THE PAGE 1 OF THE WEATHER REPORT.

THE ASHEVILLE CITIZEN

"DEDICATED TO THE UPHOLDING OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA"

ESTABLISHED 1900 ASHEVILLE, N. C. SATURDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1934 16 PAGES 2 CENTS

CITY EDITION

ICKES' DECISION PLACING ROUTE FOR PARKWAY IN N. C. HAILED AS GREAT VICTORY BY ENTIRE STATE

MOONEY WINS LEGAL BATTLE IN HIGH COURT
Supreme Tribunal Orders Warden To Show Cause In Habeas Corpus Suit
STATE EXPECTED TO FILE ANSWER
Prisoner Sentenced 18 Years Ago In Prison Bomb Outrage

FRANCE ALARMED AT RAPID GROWTH OF GERMAN FLEET
Paris, Nov. 12.—The French government today expressed its alarm at the rapid growth of the German fleet, which it considers a threat to the security of the Atlantic.

CHEROKEES TO BUILD TOURIST HOTEL, SHOPS
\$50,000 Is Appropriated For Indian Community Center
WILL CATER TO PARK VISITORS
Plans Include Store And Canteen For Recreation

SPEED ACE WILL TAKE OFF TODAY—SEEKING RECORD
NEW YORK, Nov. 12.—A new record for speed will be attempted today by a plane piloted by a man known as "Speedy" who is seeking a record of 100 miles an hour.

PEOPLE HERE RECEIVE NEWS WITH DELIGHT
Word Spreads Rapidly In City As Secretary Selects Route
THINK MERITS OF CASE RECOGNIZED
Chair Of New Era For State Section Is Soon In Development

DANIELS HIGHLY GRATIFIED OVER ICKES' DECISION
MARY CITY, N. C., Nov. 12.—The citizens of Mary City today expressed their gratification over the decision of the Secretary of the Interior to place the route for the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina.

HIGHWAY WILL TRAVERSE SECTION FAMED FOR ITS FINE MOUNTAIN SCENERY
Park-To-Park Drive Costing \$16,000,000 Will Be Routed Short Distance From Blowing Rock
LINVILLE, MOUNT MITCHELL, AND PISGAH ARE POINTS ON ROUTE
Secretary Over-Rules Findings Of Commission; Says Tennessee Has Important Park Entrance

FATHER SEEKS MISSING CHILD IN METROPOLIS
Nashville Has Believed Contact Made With Abductors
NEW YORK, Nov. 12.—A father of a missing child in New York City today expressed his belief that contact had been made with the abductors.

ARIZONA SENDS TROOPS TO HALT FEDERAL WORKS
Governor Attempts To Prevent Building Of Parker Dam
PHOENIX, Ariz., Nov. 12.—The Arizona National Guard today moved to the Parker Dam project in the Colorado River to prevent the federal government from carrying out its plans.

SURVEYS WILL BE STARTED ON PARKWAY SOON
Park Service Plans To Lay No Time In Beginning Work

The arguments were heated and delivered by the best speakers available. These men occasionally jocularly derided their opponents. North Carolina was reminded by Tennesseans that three men who became president of the United

But neither state was jocular about its deep desire to win. And each had a secret weapon which it hoped would guarantee victory. Tennessee was banking upon the immense power wielded by her senior senator, Kenneth D. McKellar, whose seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee gave him great leverage. On the other hand, North Carolina's hopes were riding on a much higher personage — President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had served as Undersecretary of the Navy when Josephus Daniels was the Secretary. Moreover, he had recently appointed Daniels Ambassador to Mexico. Thus the Carolinians felt certain their Daniels could and would enlist the President's support.

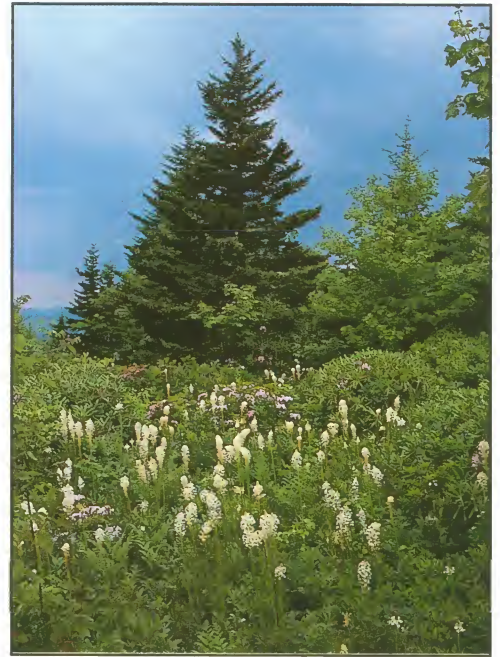
Needless to say, North Carolina was elated and Tennessee was disgusted with Icke's decision. But it, after a year's delay, clearly defined the route and finally set the wheels in motion for an actual beginning of the much needed employment project.



Ground covers, which may also be wildflowers, offer a beauty of color and pattern which extends beyond the mere days of most wildflowers. Many, such as this Foam-flower have interesting blooms which attract the eye for a time. However, long after the flowers have disappeared the maple-like leaves continue to enliven the forest.



Ferns, ever popular, seem to add a peacefulness to the forest scene. Many times while driving the Parkway, one may see ferns covering the ground under the trees for as far as the eye can see.



Sometimes the way in which one looks at a scene may change the feel of the whole setting. The flowers on this page are all Turkeybeard. However, the camera has taken a range of views from very intimate to more remote.



The two signs on this page were common after the Second World War. Photos are dated June, 1948.

A. E. Demaray, Associate Director of the National Park Service, in a 1933 public radio broadcast, aptly defined a parkway as "an elongated park with a road on standards suited to heavy continuous travel of the recreational type, with its road-sides so insulated as to give the motorist over it the impression of being out in the great open spaces, far from industrial or other commercial developments." He also explained that a parkway required a minimum right-of-way of 800 feet in order to eliminate such eyesores as billboards, hot-dog stands, gas stations, and similar structures which might sully the motorist's view. He also emphasized the fact that a parkway existed solely for recreational use. So, obviously those who envisioned the proposed scenic highway as a glorified farm-to-market mountain boulevard were in for a major disappointment. And this parkway restrictiveness proved most difficult to convey to a rural public which urgently needed and faithfully expected a "highway."

SOMETHING ELONGATED

While the routing hullabaloo was going on many other significant things relative to the project were developing. Of the utmost importance was the decision to designate the road a "parkway" under the supervision of the National Park Service.

The new parkway, according to its first supervisor, "presented a pioneer project of a scale and character new to the National Park System and new as well to the field of recreational planning." Truly, there was little available in the nature of a precedent, hence no model to pattern after. There had been some previous legislation, as early as 1928, providing for "scenic highways," such as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. And an act of May 29, 1930, actually used the word "parkway" when it provided for the acquisition, establishment, and development of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. So, it is possible that these early efforts had an influence on the wording of Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act, June 16, 1933. It authorized the federal government to "prepare a comprehensive program of public works, which shall include . . . construction,

repair, and improvement of public highways and parkways . . ."

At any rate, it was under this authority that Secretary Ickes, on November 18, 1933, informed the Director of the National Park Service that President Roosevelt had approved a proposed scenic parkway connecting the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks. Ickes, simultaneously directed him to cooperate with the Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads and get the work started at the earliest possible moment as a relief measure. Thus the Title II legislation and the "parkway" designation have proven primary ingredients in the Parkway story.

In that story, the key and critical word is "parkway." Few, if any of those laboring so diligently to secure every possible inch of the proposed road had any inkling of what the term "parkway" entailed. To them the proposed "scenic highway" would be a great boon and blessing because it would be a federal highway, paved and open to the general public. Not so, as many were shocked to discover. "Highway" and "Parkway" were not interchangeable terms, at least not on this project.



BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

The First 50 Years



by

HARLEY E. JOLLEY

with photographs by

WILLIAM A. BAKE

Appalachian Consortium Press

SOMETHING BORROWED

But it is at this point that the "something borrowed" enters the Parkway story: the National Park Service, faced with a wholly unexpected and totally new project, had no spare personnel adequately trained for the task. Therefore, it turned to the New York Westchester County park program and "borrowed" a consultant, Gilmore D. Clark, landscape architect. Thus, Clark, sat in and advised on the route hearings. But, much more importantly, he convinced the National Park Service that it should hire as supervisor one of his talented young assistants. Using Public Works funds, they took that advice and on December 26, 1933, Stanley W. Abbott reported for duty with the Parkway, thereby beginning a glorious career as the Resident Landscape Architect, 1933-1944. Surely Saint Christopher was working overtime to insure a protecting hand in this project: that brilliant young Cornell graduate became the master mind behind the design, variety, and beauty which untold millions have discovered and enjoyed while driving the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Abbott was a modern day Renaissance man — broadly talented, blessed with multi-faceted interests, and gifted with a visionary mind. No landscape architect in America had ever faced a more awesome assignment nor a more splendid opportunity. He was called upon to convert a five hundred mile mixture of horribly gutted, burnt-over waste lands and a sprinkling of second growth forestlands into a "scenic parkway." Moreover, he was to accomplish the task using untrained public works laborers.

He, to his everlasting fame, like a master weaver, utilized the varieties of good and bad as warp and woof, thereby producing, out of the mundane, a magnificent new pattern. To accomplish this necessitated strict obedience to the first commandment of landscape architects: "THOU SHALT KNOW THY TERRAIN." Thus, the very first weeks of his employment were spent, in the dead of winter, exploring, evaluating, and mentally cataloguing that vast stretch of the Blue Ridge Mountains encompassed by the proposed parkway. Unfamiliarity with the region, rural isolation, lack of roads, sparse food and lodging accommodations, pathetic map resources, and a rugged terrain handicapped yet exhilarated him. And despite his urban

Yonkers upbringing, he returned to the office with a glowing enthusiasm which never waned.

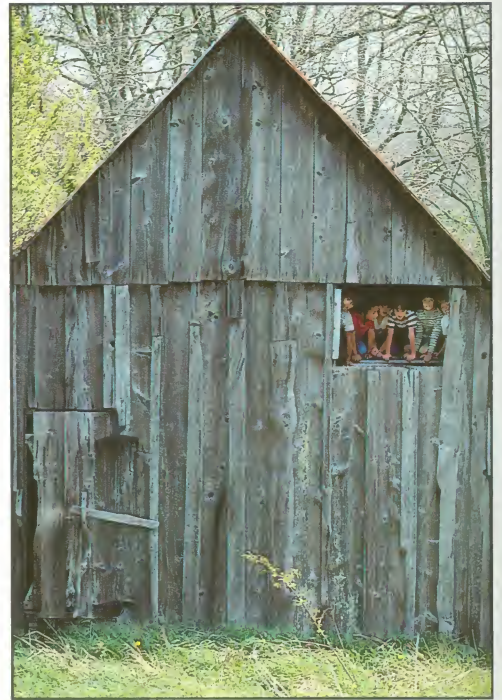
There, as Resident Landscape Architect, it was his primary responsibility to promote the coalescence of many diverse agencies into a single team and convert the parkway dream into a reality. Among the active federal participants were the Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Public Roads. At the bi-state level were governors, General Assembly members, highway commissioners, and numerous engineers, as well as the support staffs. By mutual agreement basic assignments were as follows: the landscape architects, working with the state engineers, would reconnoiter and locate the route; the two states would thereupon acquire the designated right-of-way and donate it to the federal government; then, when deed title was legally established, the landscape architects would design a plan to most acceptably utilize the terrain; the Bureau of Public Roads would then put the designed project up for bids by

public contractors. Acceptance of a bid would, finally result in the beginning of construction. And, eventually, when that construction was complete and officially accepted, the finished product would be turned over to the National Park Service for maintenance and administration.

This sounds relatively routine, but NONE of it was. Every aspect of it involved pioneering — pioneering new and unique technical, legal, administrative, and public relationships. Of course, there were squabbles. But thanks to Abbott's leadership those doomsayers who had predicted that the Parkway project would falter and fall of its own cumbersomeness were proven wrong. And one of Abbott's last official Parkway reports contains a magnificent testimonial: "I doubt that in the whole history of federal public works there could be found an agency which has collaborated more whole-heartedly, more patiently, more selflessly, and more broad-mindedly than the National Park Service."



Stanley W. Abbott



Children have a way of seeing everything. They take the time to look all around them and at the same time seem never to miss the smallest of things. They like to explore every opening, nook and cranny. It can be fun to be children on vacation or even to imitate them.



U. S. Department of Interior
Washington, D. C.

U. S. Forest Service
Headquarters - Danvers, Va.
Established - July 1, 1938

National Park Service
Arno P. Gansser, Director

VIRGINIA PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT

Bureau of Public Roads, Engineering & Construction
Field study of and preparation of plans for right-of-way, including subsequent negotiations with State's agency and general design for secondary road circulation, grade separation and drainage structures, parking overlooks and all appurtenances of parkway motor road.

E. E. vanGelder, Landscape Architect
Supervising

RECONNAISSANCE
Virginia
H. E. vanGelder

RESIDENT LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECT
and
ACTING SUPERINTENDENT
S. W. Abbott

RECONNAISSANCE
North Carolina
E. H. Abbuhl

NORTH CAROLINA PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT

Bureau of Public Roads, Engineering & Construction
Field study of and preparation of plans for right-of-way, including subsequent negotiations with State's agency and general design for secondary road circulation, grade separation and drainage structures, parking overlooks and all appurtenances of parkway motor road.

E. H. Abbuhl, Associate Landscape Architect
Supervising

INSPECTION, 1938 GRADING CONTRACTS

Including inspection of drainage structures, grade separations, secondary road and private road systems, layout and inspection of parking overlooks and all appurtenances; also coordination of special phases of right-of-way acquisition, with execution of the work, such as relocation of fences, raising of buildings, reconstruction of telephone and power lines . .

SECTIONS 1B, 1C and 1D
(Pending)
SECTIONS 1J and 1K
(Pending)
SECTIONS 1U, 1V and 1W
(Pending)

R. F. Elliott, Project Landscapes Architect

INSPECTION, 1938 GRADING CONTRACTS

Including inspection of drainage structures, grade separations, secondary road and private road systems, layout and inspection of parking overlooks and all appurtenances; also coordination of special phases of right-of-way acquisition, with execution of the work, such as relocation of fences, raising of buildings, reconstruction of telephone and power lines . .

E. H. Abbuhl, A.L.A., Supervising
SECTIONS 2J, 2K and 2L
L. M. Harniss, Project Landscapes Architect
SECTIONS 2M-1, 2M-2, 2N-1 and 2P-2
F. M. Wardle, Project Landscapes Architect

PUBLICITY

Through the public press, interviews and monthly Parkway News Bulletin.
(Staff as Assigned)

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS
and
OFFICE PERFORMANCE
K. C. McGarver
Landscape Architect

OPERATIONS & PROCUREMENT
S. P. Wams
Assistant Superintendent

M. D. Frauts
Jr. Clerk-Stenographer

Stenographer

RECREATION PARKS and SECONDARY PARKWAY CONTRACTS

Preparation of master plans for recreation parks and detailed designs for picnic areas, camp areas, overlooks, trails, shelters and preliminary layouts of gasoline stations, tea rooms, lodges and park and parkway maintenance buildings; inspection of all development work executed by R. E. P. (S. P. Wams, Acting Project Manager).

Inspection and execution of work of paving, guard rail, traffic signs, etc., in collaboration with the Bureau of Public Roads, and supervision of overpass structures and other bridges.
Sections 1J and 1P to 1T
Sections 2A to 2E

R. G. Hall, Assistant Landscape Architect
in Charge
A. S. Burns, Junior Landscape Architect

OPERATIONS

Land use and protection, including ranger patrol and detection and suppression of fire and trespass, safety of park patrons, negotiations and supervision of land leases and all annual use permits for special features, boundary marking and patrol, circulation of parkway news.

- I. Parkway, Pine Spur and Smart View Parks--Jarman Gap to Tuggle Gap, Virginia
Wallace D. Barlow, Park Ranger
- II. Parkway and Rocky Knob Park--Tuggle Gap to State Line, Virginia
Edwin M. Dale, Park Ranger
- III. Parkway, Cumberland Knob, Cliff and Tompkins Knob Parks--State Line to Beacon Heights, N.C.
Bernard T. Campbell, Park Ranger
H. A. Aggeler, Deputy Park Ranger
- IV. Parkway--Beacon Heights to French Broad River, North Carolina
John F. Reed, Park Warden

Special Assignments

1. Forestry Type Mapping: Bernard T. Campbell, Park Ranger
2. Coordination--Leases, Use Permits and right-of-way problems: Thomas K. Garry, Park Ranger

PROCUREMENT, ACCOUNTING, REPORTS, FILES AND PROPERTIES

D. E. Richards, Clerk-Stenographer
H. L. Fridinger, Junior Clerk-Stenographer
_____, Junior Clerk-Stenographer (CCC)
_____, Under File Clerk

LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT

Preparation of plans for landscape development of and other uses of land, recording final right-of-way lines, lease areas, and all major physical features; programming layout and inspection of clearing, selective cutting, soil stabilization, seeding and landscape planting, execution by the Bureau of Public Roads and C. C. C. units.

M. A. Bird, Assistant Landscape Architect
in Charge
H. E. vanGelder, Landscape Architect
(Part Time)
K. W. Doering, Junior Landscape Architect
G. F. Grissard, Junior Landscape Architect
T. K. Pease, Junior Landscape Architect

E. A. Lyts, Junior Clerk-Stenographer

In the meantime, Abbott had received important reinforcements. In April, 1934 two assistant landscape architects were assigned to him: Edward H. Abbuehl and Hendrik E. Van Gelder. These two men pioneered the reconnaissance and flagging in North Carolina and Virginia, respectively.

Abbott, with their aid, formulated basic guidelines — guidelines which determined the destiny of the Parkway:

"UTILIZE THAT WHICH EXISTS"

"CARVE AND SAVE, NOT CUT AND GUT"

"PRESERVE THE LIVED IN LOOK"

"KEEP A MANAGED LANDSCAPE IN MIND"

"PRESERVE NATURE AND HISTORY"

"MARRY BEAUTY WITH UTILITY"

"EMPHASIZE SIMPLICITY AND NATURALISTIC"

"THE HORIZON IS THE BOUNDARY LINE"

A brief abstract from one of Van Gelder's reconnaissance reports exemplifies those criteria:

"Sta. 165, Clarke's Gap. This farm is an excellent example of a place that should be acquired entire. The soil is extremely steep and very poor, and completely denuded and eroding. The line goes almost through the house. From the north-east corner fine white pine seedlings are invading the denuded land and indicate clearly how this land should be reclaimed.

"Sta. 400. Reeds Gap. First swing right to get fine view over valley below..."

In short, Van Gelder's report delineated most clearly Abbott's concept of the Parkway's mission:

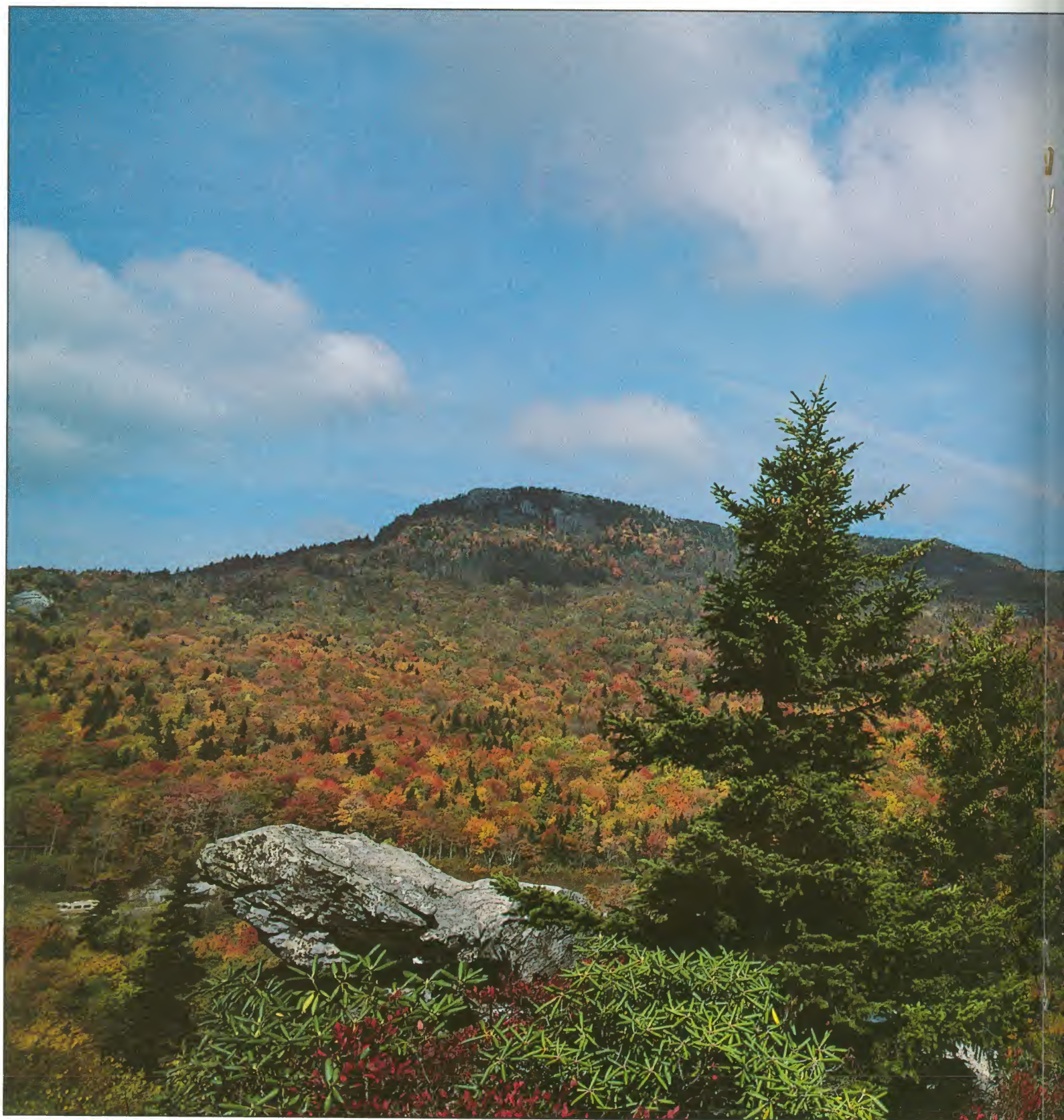
"PRESERVATION"

"RECLAMATION"

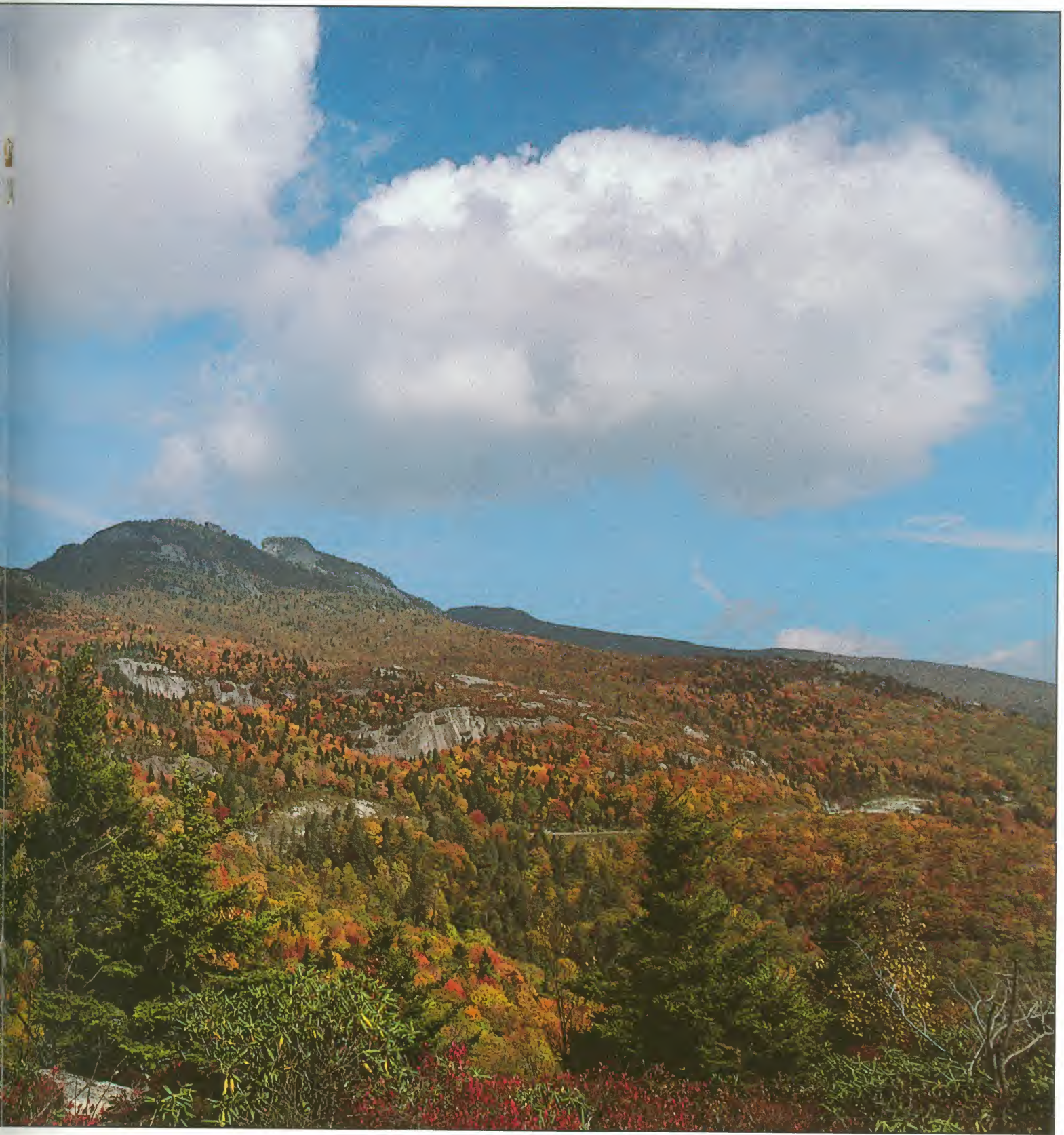
"VISTAS"



Otter Lake (above) and the panoramic view of the Shenandoah Valley (left) show the impact of Abbott's guidelines on Parkway construction and landscaping.



Fall color on Grandfather Mountain is as spectacular as anywhere on the Parkway. The red leaves of the blueberry, the green of the spruce and rhododendron, and the varied yellows, oranges, and rusts of the mixed hardwoods combined with bare rock create a scene of spectacular beauty repeated annually for all to enjoy.





Milepost near Humpback Rocks in Virginia.

SOMETHING INNOVATIVE

Meanwhile, day by day, week by week, month by month, mile by mile, reconnaissance reports poured into Abbott's office in Roanoke, Virginia. Out of them Abbott and Abbuehl devised a master plan for the complete parkway. Abbuehl's sharp, pragmatic mind served to keep Abbott's visionary enthusiasm within reasonable bounds. Their joint efforts truly deserve credit for producing the nation's most unique recreational unit. Their touch is evident in so many ways. Fully cognizant that the motorist could easily become jaded with "the same old thing" type of driving, they devised attractive means of preventing boredom: constant varieties of elevation, frequent parking overlooks, short hiking trails (leg stretchers), wayside museums, campgrounds, and especially, numerous roadside parks with a variety of recreational activities. Their reconnaissance efforts plus a landscape Architect's keen eye for convenience had discovered at least nineteen areas ideally suited to becoming what Abbott called "the beads on the necklace" — roadside parks.

The proverbial silver lining in the dark cloud of the Great Depression provided an answer to a question which had been greatly disturbing the planners: since their appropriated monies only specified "construction of a scenic road," where were they to secure funding

to purchase the additional parklands deemed so essential for a successful recreation program? The answer appeared in the form of another Roosevelt program — the Resettlement Administration. It provided funds for purchasing worn out, submarginal lands and for resettling the owners. Out of that program came thousands of dollars which purchased multiple thousands of acres — acres which today are beautiful recreation parks bearing such names as Cumberland Knob, Rocky Knob, and Doughton Park. And with that program came an ebullient federal land-buyer who emerged as such an integral part of the parkway that he became, and still is, known as "MR. BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY" — Sam P. Weems. He eventually became Abbott's colleague in 1938, with the title of "Assistant Superintendent." And years later, when Abbott departed for military duty in World War II, Weems became and remained Superintendent.

In the meantime, the fertile minds of Abbott and Abbuehl birthed some highly innovative ideas — ideas which continue to give distinction to the Parkway. First, seeking some comprehensive but simple method for identifying and pinpointing the planning, designing, and administering of the Parkway, they struck upon a remarkably simple yet effective schematism: They divided the entire parkway into two sections, simply called "Section 1" and "Section 2," with Virginia constituting Section 1 and North Carolina Section 2. Then, to facilitate

even more precision in locating any activity, they divided each section into subsections designated by letters of the alphabet, beginning with "A", with all locations based upon a north to south orientation. Thus, Section 1-A would be the first portion encountered when entering the Parkway from the Shenandoah National Park. In like manner, Section 1-Z would connect with Section 2-A, the first portion in North Carolina. The system proved so efficient and convenient that it is still in the use and has been copied by many other agencies.

A second innovation which gives a neat, distinctive touch to the Parkway was their decision to install milepost markers throughout the length of the route. The concept was "borrowed" from a source very familiar to their urbanite minds — the railroad. Their idea was proven superbly convenient and efficient for the traveler, the park ranger, and for the park administrator.

Then Abbott and Abbuehl's innovative flair reached deftly into the world of nature and engineering to produce a simple but captivating logo for the Parkway. With suggestions from colleagues, such as Lynn Harris, Jr., they encapsulated mountain peaks, an open sky, a tall wind-swept white pine, and a swath of the motor road into a circle later engraved with "BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY." The result was the attractive logo familiar to all Parkway travelers.



Parkway overlooks frequently have informative exhibits as well as expansive mountain views.

And, intent upon sharing the rich local mountain folklore, those ingenious landscape architects produced one more contribution which brought a meaningful interpretive touch to the Parkway: The routed wooden signs which add the dimension of name, elevation, and local history to what otherwise would have been simply another vista.

In addition, one of Abbott's most adroit innovations was conjured up to cope with a gargantuan communications problem. His initial adventure into the Blue Ridge back country had altered him to both the vast distances encompassed and to the dominance of rural isolationism. So, to bond his highly innovative new project with the many diverse communities, and to introduce their strange new neighbor, he dexterously inaugurated "THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY NEWS." The first issue, mimeographed, appeared in November, 1937. In it Abbott told his mountaineer readers that "We wish it were possible to have a long talk over the fence with each one of you in the manner of good neighbors. With 500 miles to cover you can readily see that this is a real task and it may be some time before we can shake hands with all of you. We still have that in mind. But, meanwhile, we have hit upon the idea of this paper . . . through "THE NEWS" we hope to win your cooperation and help."

Written by Abbott, edited and printed by his chief, Thomas C. Vint, in Washington, D.C., "THE NEWS" abounded with informative articles. Placed in country stores, court house, local post offices, and similar public places, "THE NEWS" shared park philosophy, conservation tips, current news relative to Parkway projects, and items of general interest. Abbott used it to publicize the mission of the Parkway and to dramatize its community role. It truly became a dynamic public relations masterpiece. The goodwill and community support engendered by it became and has remained one of the unique strengths of the Parkway.

SOMETHING FIRST

Concurrently, in the field, an ever growing number of unsung and greatly under-appreciated men labored diligently in Virginia and North Carolina on behalf of the Parkway — state political leaders, highway commissioners, civil engi-

neers, rod and transit men, attorneys, right-of-way purchasers, land title specialists, and so on. The list is remarkably lengthy. But it took all of their efforts to accomplish the many tasks. And finally, two years after the Parkway was born, their work climaxed in securing sufficient right-of-way and plans-in-hand to invite bids for the first Parkway construction job. The site was Section 2-A in North Carolina. With considerable excitement the bids were advertised on May 28, 1935. All responses were in by June 12, 1935, and the first Parkway contract was signed on September 3, 1935. Nello Teer thus entered the pages of Parkway history when, on September 11, 1935, his crew turned the first shovel of dirt and the Parkway's construction officially began.

But today, when the visitor so easily drives through that historic and

beautiful site he has no inkling of even how much paper work it took solely for his right of passage. As of August 23, 1935, here is a partial tally: "(1) Deed conveying Parkway land from State of North Carolina to the United States for Section 2-A from Virginia-North Carolina Line to U.S. Highway No. 21; (2) Opinion of General Counsel — legality of proceedings, concurred in by State Attorney General; (3) Recertification of opinion . . . as of date of recording deed; (4) Indemnity Agreement between United States and State of North Carolina setting aside fund for payment of any claims arising out of proceedings for acquiring title to contested tracts . . ." And so on for ten more similarly intricate legal transactions. Multiply this by five hundred miles and the immensity of the deeds and actions necessary to acquire and construct the Blue Ridge Parkway is vividly portrayed.



BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY NEWS..... a bulletin of popular information for parkway neighbors along the Blue Ridge....

Volume IV

July-August, 1941

Number 6

Issued by Office of the Blue Ridge Parkway, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 633 Shenandoah Life Insurance Bldg., Roanoke, Virginia.

AND NOW OUR STORY'S BEGUN

If we had to put our finger on the one thing that impresses us most about the Parkway visitors, it would be the number of questions they ask. Talk to a group of them and you find yourself between a cross fire of "What mountain is this?", "What flower is that?", and the where, what, when, how, and why of a number of things. This we like, of course, because it shows that they are interested, and we intend to give as many of the answers as we can at the spot where the questions are most often asked--this by the relatively simple means of informational signs.

In the Bluff Park a group of CCC boys have been working on special signs and markers for the Roanoke to Blowing Rock sections of the Parkway, and many of the markers are in place. This first batch are "place names". One has been erected in each parking overlook as "Pine Spur", "Devil's Garden", and the message will carry the height above sea level of the parking area and as well the elevations of any important peaks the view.

Another set of answers ready for the tourists are milepost markers. One has been placed on the Parkway near the entrance to each of the recreational parks--Smart View, Rocky Knob, Cumberland Knob, and Bluff. The posts are fourteen feet high. On the face toward southbound traffic is the mileage to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and on the northbound side the distance to Shenandoah National Park. The two parks are, of course, the terminal points of the Parkway when completed, and the idea was borrowed from the railroad depot where you'll remember the traveler is told by a similar sign which way which track goes and how far.

Hanging from a crossarm of our milepost is a carving of the Parkway emblem, the one which appears in the masthead of this paper.

So much for the beginning of our story about the Blue Ridge. There is much more to the tale, and there are ways we have in mind for the telling of it--lectures, campfires, historic markers, restoration of old buildings--but one chapter at a time.

AGRICULTURAL LAND LEASING

From time to time in stories about the rental of Parkway lands for farming we have said that we are aiming for a long-term planning which would enable the farmer to look far ahead toward the use of Parkway lands. Thus far, as all of you know, we have been somewhat on a temporary year-to-year basis while we have been pushing the landscape program and the re-conditioning of Parkway lands. In this article we want to report that the land use study is now making good progress and to explain briefly the purpose of it. In other articles we will go into more details about use of our lands for grazing, hay, crop rotation, clean cultivated crops, small grains, orchards, etc.

What is now in progress is only a classification of our lands (we wish we could find a shorter way of expressing it). First we study the land and try to judge the type of use which is fitted to a given piece and which would make an attractive picture from the Parkway at the same time. We must find a use that will be reasonably profitable for the farmer who is near enough to work it. We must also find a use that would keep the land in good shape for time to come. At the same time we must consider the agricultural methods that would be suitable; that is, the type of tillage, amount of lime needed, type of fertilizer and how much; how many heads of cattle can graze the piece without eating the grass roots, etc. After this we can figure the fair fee, taking into account the fact that the farmer who leases the land has to make a reasonable profit.

In 1937 Stan Abbott established a newsletter to provide information on the Parkway to neighbors. In 1979 Abbott's idea was re-established as the *Milepost* magazine, providing current information to Parkway visitors and neighbors.

SOMETHING BLUE AND CONGRESSIONAL

At this point "Something Blue" took on special meaning for the Parkway. From day-one in its career various names had been applied, beginning of course, with "Park-to-Park Scenic Highway." Early maps and drawings display the nomenclature "Shenandoah to Great Smoky Mountains National Parkway." One Park Service official proposed that it be called "The Shenandoah-Great Smoky Mountains National Parks Parkway and Stabilization Project." Other nominations included "The Roosevelt Parkway," "The Ickes Highway," "The Doughton Parkway," and "The Appalachian Parkway." The name-game ended with an intervention by Secretary Ickes. And once again he pragmatically placed his indelible mark on the project. After weighing all proposals, and after conferring with the Division of Geographic Names, he decreed in February, 1936 that henceforth the project would officially be known by its most logical name, the "BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY."

Almost simultaneously the Parkway also entered into a new poli-

tical and financial relationship. Prior to 1936 Parkway funding came via Public Works Administration Title II relief funds. Those funds were allocated and administered at the sole discretion of the administrator, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. But by 1936 Congress had become much more jealous of its prerogatives and therefore took action which placed the Parkway under congressional surveillance and funding. North Carolina Congressman Robert L. Doughton, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and an ardent champion of the Parkway, brilliantly guarded its interests during the change-over. Out of his superb parliamentary skills emerged, on June 30, 1936, Public Law No. 848 which simultaneously legalized the name "Blue Ridge Parkway," officially assigned it to the National Park Service for administration, and made Congress responsible for its future financing.

SOMETHING REBUFFED

At almost exactly the same time there occurred the second major Parkway routing battle. The issue this time concerned the location of the southern terminus, linking with

the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The National Park Service and the State of North Carolina desired to take the Parkway south from Water Rock Knob, lead it through Soco Gap and Soco Valley into the Indian town of Cherokee and on into the Smokies. To their embarrassment, the Cherokee Indians, through whose reservation the proposed route would run, rejected, outright, the proposal. Weeks, then months, and finally years of stalemate occurred. The Indians claimed the proposed route would usurp all of their best farming lands and would rapid-transit potential visitors into bypassing their main source of income — the tourist shops.

For three years 1936-1939, the battle continued, with white man's proposals being adeptly countered and rejected by the red man's tribal council. Lobbying, political pressure, and friendly persuasions all failed. And, in the end, the Cherokee Indians successfully rejected the proposed route, thereby forcing the white men to seek an alternative southern terminus. Thus, today's Parkway bypasses the town of Cherokee, and joins the Great Smoky Mountains National Park via Ravensford to Oconaluftee.



Parkway construction in Patrick County, Virginia, 1936.



A Message from the Executive Director

Appalachian Consortium projects are always exciting because they represent the collaboration of many different people from throughout the Southern Highlands. *Blue Ridge Parkway: The First 50 Years* is a shining example of such collaboration because it represents the combined labor and skill of talented authors, artists, and editors. Each has contributed in a very special way to this labor of love.

Harley Jolley, Professor of History at Mars Hill College, has provided a manuscript which weaves its way through fifty years of Parkway history in the same eloquent manner as the road itself winds along the crest of the Blue Ridge.

William A. Bake, regarded as one of America's foremost photographers, lends his special magic to the project through a moving interpretation of the Parkway's unique environmental and cultural vistas.

Every collaborative project needs a magician with supernatural powers. Ours came in the form of the Parkway's Chief Interpreter, Steve Beatty. Steve's exceptional skill and talent was instrumental in virtually every phase of the production process.

Thanks are also extended to my colleague Jacqueline Stewart, Assistant Director of the Appalachian Consortium Press, for her helpful suggestions with layout and design.

Last, but certainly not least, a sincere word of gratitude is extended to Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Gary Everhardt, for his support and encouragement.

Barry M. Buxton
Executive Director
Appalachian Consortium

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SOMETHING MADE BEAUTIFUL

But, all during this time, solutions were being found for other hosts of problems which accompany so huge a project. And, by increasing numbers, a great variety of men were finding employment on the Parkway. Abbott's 1939 annual superintendent's report listed, under "PERSONNEL," three landscape architects, one associate, six assistant, and twelve junior, landscape architects, plus two landscape gardeners — a total of twenty-four landscape specialists! Today's Parkway has only two.

What is so important is that those specialists were facilitating the employment of many needy mountaineers. In fact, during the period 1936-1942, Parkway projects provided employment for four Civilian Conservation Corps camps, averaging about 200 men at any given time, plus four public works projects, averaging about 150 men each at any given time. And as these public works projects were phased out because of World War II, many conscientious objectors were assigned as replacements.

The Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees and the public works crews made many lasting and meaningful contributions to the Parkway. A partial list includes:

- 82 miles of Parkway slopes were graded
- 76 miles of Parkway slopes were seeded
- 25 miles of Parkway slopes were planted
- 40+ miles of fences, mostly rail, were erected
- Many miles of selective cutting, erosion control and land restoration
- Salvage and rehabilitation of such classic architectural structures as Mabry Mill and Brinegar Cabin
- Construction of two lakes
- Construction of four major utility areas and three utility substations
- Source for funding for acquisition of five recreational parks
- Construction of Rocky Knob Cabins

Abbott paid these workers a beautiful and most well-deserved compliment, saying, "The great earth moving machines have left a rough trail through the mountains, a wayside ravelled with many threads to be caught up. It has been in the reknitting, in the healing over, and finishing that the emergency pro-



Mabry Mill before restoration, as it looked in 1939, and after, as it looked in 1952. It is just one of the many things "made beautiful."



grams have made of a mountain highway a mountain parkway. Without such a follow-up much would be lost in the Parkway's beauty, and much that makes it practical as well." Simultaneously, as the above mentioned groups performed their tasks, contract after contract promoted Parkway construction with labor hired by commercial contractors. Their work progressed so well that on April 1, 1939, without any fanfare, a fifty mile section south of Roanoke, Virginia was opened for the first public use.

SOMETHING "ON HOLD"

Those construction activities reached a new peak in fiscal year 1940-1941 when a total of \$9,000,000 was actively at work. But sadly, this great progress — like so many other things — fell victim to World War II. As early as September 1941, presidential orders impounded \$4,000,000 previously committed to the Parkway. And, in November 1942, the War Production Board issued a STOP order on all Parkway contracts. Up to that point more than twenty-million dollars had been appropriated and invested in the Parkway. Those dollars had facilitated construction of approximately 330

miles of the major roadway, of which 170 were paved and fully open to the public. In brief, the Parkway, with seven years of construction, was well on the road to completion when it was put on HOLD for the duration of the war.

Off to war went most of the Parkway's staff, including Abbott. Sam P. Weems, assuming new duties, rendered great service as the new Parkway superintendent. Under his leadership the Parkway made several distinct contributions to the war effort. First, it accepted and provided supervision for three Conscientious Objector camps on the Parkway. Those men worked at a variety of assignments, basically continuing the tasks of the Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. Second, the Parkway cooperated with the Department of Defense and permitted several areas to be used for army training maneuvers designed to teach the art of mountain warfare. Third, the Parkway's conscientious objectors combined park beautification with war effort by cutting many cords of dead chestnut trees, which, in turn, supplied tannic acid for war-time leather, including army boots. Fourth, the Parkway relaxed its "Recreational Use Only" rules and allowed school buses and commercial trucks to use the motor road in order to save gasoline and rubber.



Flat Top Manor was the summer home of Moses Cone, founder of Cone Mills. The manor and the estate surrounding it were donated to the Blue Ridge Parkway as a memorial to the "denim king." The twenty-six miles of carriage trails built by the Cones have become popular hiking and cross country ski trails.



Bass Lake, one of four lakes built by Moses Cone, is seen here through one of Flat Top Manor's beautiful leaded glass windows.

SOMETHING VERY NEW

Despite these contributions, World War II levied a devastating toll upon the Parkway. Not only did it kill the great momentum which in seven years had completed almost two thirds of the project, but it also siphoned off funding and congressional support. A measure of that loss is indicated by the simple fact that it has taken more than forty years to complete the remainder of the Parkway.

In all fairness, it is necessary to point out that in the prewar period multiple millions of dollars poured into a variety of make-work jobs. Thus, suddenly, the National Park Service, among others, had a glut of funds and laborers, especially via the Civilian Conservation Corps. But the postwar era brought what amounts to an almost complete reversal of this. National Parks throughout the nation experienced extremely hard times. And a parsimonious Congress seemingly couldn't have cared less that their great national treasures were in jeopardy. Even the traditional "penny in the shoe" was grudgingly bestowed. Thus, the Parkway was just one more of the apparently forgotten and sadly neglected areas. In truth, conditions became so bad for the parks that one of

their greatest champions, Bernard de Voto, in an October 1953 HARPER'S MAGAZINE article, urged that the National Parks be closed because "So much of the priceless heritage which the Service must guard for the United States is going to hell."

Luckily, public concern and able leadership under National Park Service Director Conrad L. Wirth promoted a far better alternative — "MISSION 66." This program gave renewed hope for the Parkway and its sister park units. The underlying thesis was that a dynamic ten year program, 1956-1966, could sufficiently rehabilitate parks all over the nation to enable them to joyfully celebrate the National Park Service's Golden Anniversary in 1966.

The ambitiousness of the program is revealed by looking at the projected costs for one small unit in the system: the best estimates indicated that a minimum of \$43,000,000 would be necessary to complete the Blue Ridge Parkway. So great a sum was not immediately forthcoming, but marked improvement in funding did begin to show. And, by fiscal year 1958, approximately \$16,000,000 were active on the Parkway — an all time project high.



A part of the Mission 66 Program, the Museum of North Carolina Minerals was built by a cooperative effort between the state of North Carolina and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Moreover, the Mission 66's dynamic impetus stimulated a new series of accomplishments on the Parkway. Among them were the construction and opening of numerous visitor centers along the Parkway, such as the one at Humpback Rocks, featuring a pioneer farmstead. In addition, modern housing for park employees, as well as fine campground and picnic areas, were completed and opened for public enjoyment. And, finally, a new dimension was added to the Parkway offerings: new camp-fire circles and well designed outdoor amphitheaters enabled the Blue Ridge Parkway to offer the traditional National Park Service interpretive services. Every one of these accomplishments were also rich fulfillments of the Parkway master plan, albeit twenty years late.

SOMETHING UNIQUE

In the meantime, other great things were happening to enrich the visitor's experience on the Parkway.

First, a unique example of federal/state cooperation to provide an unusual public service was the establishment of the Museum of North Carolina Minerals on the Parkway, at Milepost 331, near Spruce Pine, North Carolina. That town was the center of mica and feldspar mining, as well as a favorite haunt of rock hounds seeking North Carolina gemstones.

As early as 1939 local citizens were conferring with National Park officials about joining hands to build a minerals museum on the Parkway, showcasing the local mining and gem stone industries. World War II adversely interfered



The Parkway benefited from many Mission 66 projects including roadway construction, new visitor centers, residences, and more.

but shortly after the war museum efforts were energetically renewed. Success finally rewarded those efforts with the State of North Carolina funding the \$75,000 building and providing the bulk of exhibit materials. The National Park Service, for its share, provided the site, plans, staffing, and maintenance. And this unique joint effort was dedicated on June 17, 1955 by North Carolina Governor Luther Hodges to a standing ovation.

SOMETHING GIVEN

In addition, a second, third, and fourth event of great significance for the Parkway occurred in rapid sequence in the 1949-1952 period. Each added tremendously to the unique recreational value of the Parkway. And each owed much to the skillful diplomacy of Superintendent Weems. First, there came the munificent donation of the beautiful 3,600 acre estate of Moses H. Cone, complete with mansion, carriage house, orchard, trout lakes, etc. Shortly thereafter, a similarly beneficent donation came via the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, conveying some 4,000 acres from the estate of the late Julian Price. And a brief time later, Superintendent Weems realized accomplishment of a task he had husbanded for years: John D. Rockefeller, Jr., purchased land containing and sheltering beautiful Linville Falls and graciously donated it to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Cone Estate became one of the most popular recreational areas on the entire parkway and memorializes the gracious gift by its official title — "THE MOSES H. CONE MEMORIAL PARK." In similar manner, the Price Estate, which joined the Cone lands, is now a very popular fishing, hiking, picnicking, and camping area with a beautiful lake — all with the appropriate name, "JULIAN PRICE MEMORIAL PARK." And the Rockefeller donation enabled the Park Service to develop a campground, visitor parking, a charming visitor center, and numerous hiking trails which have made the Linville Falls park a major destination area.

Speaking of donations provides an opportunity to share the flip side of that story — the Parkway's donation to its neighbors and, through them, to millions of visitors. That donation is also one of the great American conservation landmarks. In gross weight it would register in

mega-tons and in numbers megamillions. The gift? The concept and practice of soil and moisture conservation. Recall that much of the land acquired for the Parkway was worn out, submarginal soil. The Parkway landscape architects, beginning with Abbott, quickly realized that landscaping, seeding, planting, and carefully husbanding Parkway lands was a most inadequate measure because the traveler's eye also encompassed the adjoining lands. Some of those were real eye-sores. Therefore, early in its career, the Parkway developed a two-fold cure for the problem. First, where possible, it acquired scenic easement rights on critically located land, thereby legally restricting its use and care. More importantly, Abbott quickly initiated a leasing plan whereby Parkway neighbors could, for very nominal fees, lease Parkway land and put it to agricultural use. Abbott deliberately did this in order to "maintain the lived-in look."

But, as the Park Service worked with the local farmers it provided them with many tons of lime and fertilizer, as well as millions of grass seed, thousands of trees, and bountiful advice about soil conservation. The ancient "monkey see, monkey do" syndrome was thereby activated. Farmer after farmer saw the rich benefits of what he was doing to the park-owned lands and he quietly, but effectively did likewise on his own holdings. Superintend-

ent Weems was a great booster of this program. He also appreciated the significance of this cultural change. Commenting upon it, he said, "Education, still the mightiest weapon of conservation, has, on the Parkway, a strong ally in the noble pride of the mountaineer whose once isolated domain has become exposed to the inquisitive eye of the public. As our neighbors learn that the world is making a beaten path to their doors, they seek our assistance in making a better mouse trap."

Thus, the graceful pastoral scene, the attractive farm bordering the motor road, the green sweep of a graceful meadow, or the seemingly virgin white pine forest so lissomely framing the Parkway view — all are fruits of conservation, and all are the Parkway's deliberate donation to neighbor and visitor alike. That conservation is unique in the National Park Service: the traditional policy for managing national parks is to let nature run its course, with weather and the natural elements becoming, thereby, the manager. The Blue Ridge Parkway, on the other hand, has staked its reputation and the guardianship of its legacy upon professional management of the landscape. Thus, the neighboring farmers' newly learned conservation skills simultaneously enhance the beauty and lessen maintenance costs. So the conservation donation continues to yield a double bonus.



Flat Top Manor, the summer home of Moses H. Cone was given to the Parkway as part of the lands donated for the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park.



When the Parkway was established a plan was formulated to preserve a sampling of the mountain cabins and other structures representative of the culture of the mountains. Two of the best examples are the Puckett Cabin (left) and Brinegar Cabin (above). Preserved with the cabins are some of the outbuildings and other structures. Two kinds of rail fences are pictured on this page, a snake rail fence which leads to the Puckett Cabin and a part of the picket fence surrounding the garden at Brinegar Cabin.

The durability of the materials used in these cabins is visible on the opposite page. The oak shakes come under constant attack by weather and other natural agents. The lichens circular growth pattern lends an interesting contrast to the square lines of the shakes themselves.



SOMETHING PERFUNCTORY, SOMETHING HOSTILE

But all Parkway efforts have not been success stories, at least not instant success. One of the initial concepts, built into the original master plan, was that motor car services, plus gift shops, food and accommodation facilities were logical and proper facilities to have on the Parkway. This was true, first, because it was so lengthy, and second, because it was relatively isolated, hence inconveniently distant from the food and lodging comforts of the urban world. Therefore, Abbott and Abbuehl planned public accommodations for the Parkway, spaced approximately sixty miles apart. And, based upon precedents firmly established in other national parks, they assumed that those facilities would be concession operations. Moreover, Abbott was totally convinced that the combination of mountain scenery and mountain handicrafts would make an irresistible tourist attraction: "Mountain crafts will be to the Parkway what oranges are to Florida."

In addition, to appreciate the need for visitor accommodations, simply recall that at the time of Abbott's planning, in the mid 1930's, the crest of the Blue Ridge was barren of any tourist facilities. Even its Appalachian Trail lacked shelters. So the planned visitor services were obviously welcome news for the traveler.

But, to Abbott's exasperation, repeated Park Service efforts to attract and secure concessioners failed. One of his annual reports vividly reflected his disappointment: "No aspect of the Parkway work during the year has been as disappointing as the perfunctory response to the advertisement for a Parkway operator."

The disappointment continued until 1941, when the Parkway's first concession operation was authorized: National Parks Concessions, Inc., received franchise rights for all Parkway concessions except those at the Peaks of Otter. And its first unit opened as a sandwich shop at Cumberland Knob. Both the site and shop building were historic. Cumberland Knob was the first demonstrational recreational area on the Parkway and the building was the first built on the Parkway with relief money for recreational purposes.

Sadly, this first concession attempt was stymied by the coming of

World War II. Nevertheless, at war's end, new efforts were launched to establish concession operations. First fruits of those efforts were the opening of the first service station, first coffee/gift shop, and first lodge on the Parkway at the Bluffs (Doughton Park). But to acquire these the National Park Service had to design, finance, and construct all the buildings, then lease them to the concessionaire.

These repeated efforts to promote concession operations throughout the length of the Parkway touched off unexpected hostility. As Parkway and general tourist travel explosively boomed in the post-war era, local entrepreneurs along the motor route saw a potential bonanza in catering to that trade. They also quickly saw a potential rival in Parkway concession operations. So they began to organize and launched avid protests. This was especially true in the older resort areas, such as Blowing Rock, North Carolina.

The protesters vehemently broadcasted their objections, saying that the federal government had absolutely no right to erect buildings on the Parkway with taxpayers' money and then use them to house federally subsidized monopolies which deprived local free enterprise of its due profits.

Led by able lobbyists, the protesters demanded and got public hearings. In those hearings, the federal spokesmen religiously denied ill intentions, pointing out that the remoteness from local services and the urgent needs of Parkway travelers were the *raison d'être* for concession operations, not profit.

Be that as it may, the end, long range, result was that numerous visitor facilities originally planned for the Parkway were pigeon-holed. But, on the other hand, certain key facilities never fell victim to the opposition. Thus, today's Parkway visitor, probably without realizing it, encounters a number of concessionaires and concession operations. Among the most popular are the Mabry Mill and three lodges (Peaks of Otter, Doughton Park, and Pisgah Inn). Yet, luckily for the visitor so unfortunate as to find the "No Vacancy" on those facilities, the passing years have brought so many private accommodations to the Parkway's borders that food, motor services, and lodging are now easily obtainable. Thus, this controversy has ended with a mutual armistice and a mutual benefit while at the same time Abbott's plans have proven prophetically correct.



The first concession on the Parkway was the sandwich shop at Cumberland Knob Picnic Area. This photo was taken during the 1948 season.

And even his dreams for attractive Parkway concession outlets for mountain handicraft have come true via an unusual stroke of luck. And "strokes of luck" became so vital a part of Parkway history that this one was in very good company: totally unexpected and absolutely unplanned, the acquisition of the Moses H. Cone estate brought into Parkway possession a magnificent manor house. Seeking the most creative way to utilize it, Parkway Superintendent Weems sensitively and successfully invited the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild Association to take over the mansion as a gift shop featuring fine mountain folk crafts.

This project proved so successful that it promoted a bold new craft venture — a venture so ambitious that few dreamed it would become a reality. This was the establishment of a fabulous new folk art center on the Parkway near Asheville, North Carolina. Its conception, rendition, and potential outreach were so gripping that the wife of the then Vice President of the United States, Mrs. Walter Mondale (a skilled potter), not only came to dedicate the ground breaking but returned to christen and open the grand, new facility. Displaying and demonstrating the crafts of nine states, it has already become internationally famous.

And, to further enhance Abbott's dream of authentic craft outlets, a new concessions operation, the North West Trading Post, was authorized in 1958. Sponsored and managed by local talent, it is filled with local products: country ham, cheese, candy, antiques, quilts, and a variety of hand crafted items.

SOMETHING REJECTED

Along with those resounding achievements there also came an occasional failure. Probably the most overwhelming one was an effort to extend the Blue Ridge Parkway into Georgia. This, of course, fitted into Roosevelt's suggestion that the Parkway start up in Vermont and run the ridges into Georgia.

For years the idea lay dormant but re-surfaced in the post World War II era when Vermont to Florida tourist travel boomed. Finally sufficient support for a southern extension was marshaled to secure congressional support. And Public Law 87-135, August 10, 1961, authorized an appropriation for studying and surveying the route.



One of the "toll booths" built on the Parkway which never collected fees but served the public as an information station.

Subsequently, an enormous amount of time, energy and debate were expended, with the assumption that the proposed extension was a sure thing. Even the headquarters of the Parkway was moved to Asheville, North Carolina in order to more effectively plan and administer the soon-to-be enlarged Parkway.

But for a variety of reasons, the proposed extension never materialized. Environmentalists offered strong opposition. So did a number of influential persons who held private hunt clubs and choice summer resort lands in the path of the proposed route. All of these and others, including the projected prohibitively high cost of land acquisition, caused the State of Georgia to refuse to buy the required right of way and donate it for Parkway purposes as North Carolina and Virginia had done years previously. As a direct result, the Georgia extension never got beyond the "study" stage and is still in limbo.

SOMETHING TO PAY

There was another failure, in an entirely different vein. This was the failure to successfully levy a toll or entrance fee for using the Parkway. The initial telegram that launched the Parkway project in October 1933, stated that a small toll was recommended by President Roosevelt to help defray the cost. But from that moment, North Carolinians have vigorously and successfully challenged every effort made by the federal government to charge entrance fees.

On four separate occasions the Department of Interior has authorized and publicly proposed establishment of an entrance fee program on the Parkway. In fact, their plans had progressed so far, finally, as to have erected collection stations and hired uniformed fee takers to man those stations.

North Carolinians minced no words in voicing objections, saying that the federal government was violating a sacred trust in placing a toll on the Parkway. They vigorously reminded the federal representatives that the original planners had fully agreed that if the states donated the right of way the federal government would construct and operate the Parkway toll free. The federal spokesmen, just as vigorously, denied wrong doing and repeatedly advanced the argument that traditionally National Parks charge user fees, in fact were mandated to do so by Congress. And, as redundantly as whippoorwills, they denied that user fees were "tolls."

The Tarheels, as redundantly, used the word "tolls" as a battle cry. Strangely, Virginia never came to the aid of her sister state on this issue, perhaps because her Skyline Drive routinely collected entrance fees. Regardless, the citizens of North Carolina used every tactic available, including congressional delegation visits to the White House and to the Secretary of the Interior. For years, the issue, like a volcano, erupted, discharged a mighty blast, and subsided. Each time the Tarheels were able to prevent the levying of automobile entrance fees.



Views of Grandfather Mountain and the Linn Cove Viaduct showing that it is possible to build a bridge with minimal damage to the environment. It is the result of disagreement between the landowner and the government which ultimately benefited all parties and the Parkway visitor.

SOMETHING HIGH, SOMETHING LOW

The pervasiveness of nature's peace and quiet that has attracted millions to the Parkway artfully belies the remarkable routing brouhahas that have disrupted its political peace. One of the most important of those concerned routing around Grandfather Mountain. Arguments concentrated on the relative merits of a "low road" versus a "high road." A series of events, seemingly routine, climaxed in a confrontation between Hugh Morton, the owner of the mountain, and the National Park Service, with the State of North Carolina in between.

Traditionally, by mutual consent, in selection of Parkway routings, the National Park Service, using its criteria of aesthetics and utility, designated the desired route. The State thereupon obtained the needed land and conveyed it to the federal government. That body, through the Bureau of Public Roads, then constructed the road.

The Grandfather Mountain section had a normal beginning. In 1938 eight miles of right-of-way were acquired and in 1940, some 3.8 miles of Parkway were constructed on that right-of-way. But the interruption of World War II delayed further construction.

In the aftermath of war came events that put a whole new face on the Grandfather Mountain routing. For one thing, the mountain had been developed into a major tourist attraction. For another, the National Park Service had become dissatisfied with the original right-of-way for the remainder of the route around the mountain and sought a higher way. Out of this came a protracted dispute, between



Morton and the federal government. He contended that a proper right-of-way had already been taken by the state and that the federal authorities should accept and build upon it. But, rejecting that so-called "low road," the National Park Service projected its "high road" higher up the mountain, with a tunnel to avoid scarring the mountain.

The state cooperated with the federal authorities and attempted to use condemnation to obtain the "high road" right-of-way. However, after reviewing state statutes and the right-of-way previously conveyed for this route, the state reversed its position and returned the condemned land. But the Park Service would not accept the "low road" offering and the owner would not agree to the high one. The former declared that its high road met "the scenic, recreational, preservation, and safety standards that have been so successfully achieved on the completed portions of the Parkway . . . we cannot now, with completion so near, lower the high standards we all have been working so long to maintain."

Morton rebutted that, "This mountain is not mine or theirs to gut and deface and kill off its wilder-

ness characteristics." He also declared that implementing the "high road" would be the environmental equivalent of "taking a switchblade to the Mona Lisa."

The determination of the National Park Service in holding out for its "high road" was fully met by the adamancy of the land owner in rejecting it. Repeated efforts at settlement failed, despite the skilled efforts of numerous political leaders.

Yet, so far as it is possible to ascertain, both the owner and the National Park Service representatives were sincerely convinced that their position was the only valid one. In the end, changes in key personnel and governmental officials paved the way for a compromise and a so called "middle route" was decided upon.

To effect the compromise, a three-way "give" occurred: the National Park Service gave up its "high road." Morton gave or exchanged sufficient land to the state for constructing a middle road. The state, in turn, gave that new right-of-way to the federal government. And with all this giving, culminating in 1967, the gate was opened for completing the final link of the Parkway.

INTRODUCTION TO:

THE BOOK

Early in the planning stages of Golden Anniversary activities for the Blue Ridge Parkway the desire for a publication was expressed. There was never any doubt about who should be the author or who the photographer. Dr. Harley E. Jolley and Dr. William A. Bake both willingly donated their work to help make this book a reality.

The only question was to decide what appearance the book should take. What look would best weave the story of the first fifty years by Dr. Jolley, the black and white photographs primarily of the first

forty years, from park files, and the color photographs taken in the last decade by William A. Bake?

The solution was to let the black and white photographic materials support the written history of the first fifty years and to let the color photographs give a feeling for what the Blue Ridge Parkway has become. The material is thus divided into two distinct sections. It was felt that neither section should outweigh the other. Therefore, the two sections have been equally mixed by alternating two page sections of color photos and historical text.

THE AUTHOR

Harley E. Jolley is a Professor of History at Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, North Carolina. Each summer since 1958, he has served as the seasonal historian/supervisor from the National Park Service, his area of expertise being the Blue Ridge Parkway. He has published numerous articles about North Carolina labor, forest history and the environment in such periodicals as *American Forests*, *Forest History*, and the *North Carolina Historical Review* in addition to a book, *The Blue Ridge Parkway* which won the prestigious Thomas Wolfe Literary Award. Dr. Jolley lives with his wife and family in Mars Hill, North Carolina.



THE PHOTOGRAPHER

William A. Bake is the photographer/author of two books about the Blue Ridge Mountains. His first, *Mountains and Meadows along the Blue Ridge Parkway*, was published by the National Park Service in 1976. A much larger, more artistic treatment of the area is *The Blue Ridge*, published in 1984 by Southern Living Books. Dr. Bake is especially well known for *The American South* (written by columnist-commentator James J. Kilpatrick). Bake's work has also been featured in *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *Natural History*, *Audubon*, *Southern Living*, *The New York Times*, *Sierra Club* calendars, *National Geographic* books, and other publications. Dr. Bake and his family live in Boone, North Carolina.



SOMETHING TOTALLY NEW

Since that time the National Park Service has given major attention to getting the final link constructed. And one of the Parkway's "strokes of luck" has accompanied that effort. The lengthy delay occasioned by Morton's objections allowed "ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT" to become an almost god-like determinant for federal construction work. Thus, restrictions governing the 1960's did not even exist in the 1930's when the Parkway began. Aesthetics and a landscape architect's sense of integrity had been the chief controls in those early construction years. By the time the "middle road" was agreed upon for Grandfather Mountain every aspect of construction, even the most minute, legally entailed protection of the environment.

Faced, thus, with entirely new challenges, the federal authorities, just as concerned as Morton about environmental damages, turned to "something new" — THE COMPUTER. With it they designed a fabulous and highly innovative means of routing the Parkway through the environmentally fragile Grandfather terrain with a minimum of damage. The centerpiece, literally and figuratively, for their solution was the Linn Cove Viaduct. Using construction techniques developed in Switzerland, the professional skills of a French engineer, and the diligent labor of local mountain men, the National Park Service has completed the viaduct. It was constructed in segments, "from the top down," to avoid marring the environment. It is so unique, so skillfully engineered and so aesthetically designed that it not only blends into Grandfather Mountain without scarring but also gives the visitor the same feeling that Byrd promised for his Skyline Drive: a sense of exhilaration, as if the traveler were an aviator rather than a motorist — a true wonderway. The structure has won many awards and is a magnificent way to close the link, thereby a fitting tribute for the Parkway's Golden Anniversary.

But for the cost conscious there is an interesting comparison: the approximately one-fifth of a mile Linn Cove Viaduct cost more than twelve million dollars in the 1980's whereas the 1930's construction cost for all of Section 2-A (12.49 miles) was slightly over five hundred thousand dollars. Yet, despite constantly sky-rocketing price tags,

the Parkway's "Something borrowed, something blue, something old, something new, and a penny in your shoe" have for fifty years, brought untold joy and excitement for millions of visitors. And, like a good marriage, those years have been accompanied by a never ending adventure.

SOMETHING DEDICATED, SOMETHING MONUMENTAL

In those years many dedications of special achievements, such as the building of the James River Bridge, or the completing of the Parkway in Virginia, have been celebrated. And to honor exceptionally out-

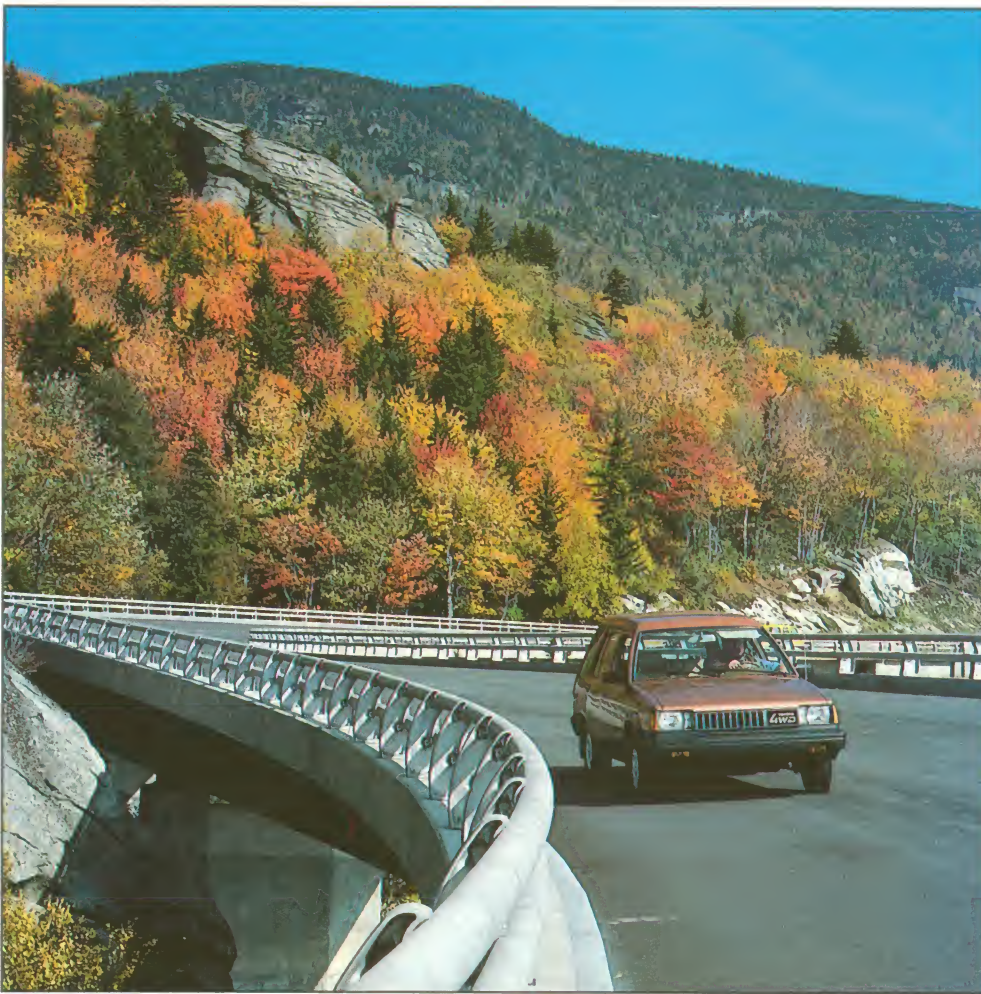
standing contributions to the Parkway several parks have been dedicated as memorials, such as "Doughton Park" honoring Robert L. Doughton, one of the Parkway's strongest political champions. Rufus L. Gwynn, E. B. Jeffress and R. Getty Browning freely gave a lifetime of support to the Parkway cause and have fitting memorials along the Parkway, such as E. B. Jeffress Park. And Abbott Lake, at the Peaks of Otter, gracefully but quietly honors the man whose loving and professional imprints so gracefully but quietly distinguish the entire Parkway — Stanley W. Abbott, Resident Landscape Architect and first master planner for the Parkway.



Recent view of the James River Bridge.



Dedication ceremonies for the E. B. Jeffress Park, June 27, 1968.



The Linn Cove Viaduct is one of the engineering marvels of the world. The actual methods of construction were not new. However, of 153 precast concrete sections, no two were exactly alike. To increase the engineering problems, this bridge was built from the air to protect the fragile ecology of the land below. The final product shows the effort. The land under this bridge, completed in 1983, looks more like the land under a 50 year old bridge.

Fall color on the Blue Ridge Parkway is some of the best in the world. The large variety of tree species creates an unequalled multitude of color. The fall season visitation is higher than any other. The month of October alone accounts for 12% of the Parkway's annual visitation. Parkway overlooks allow travelers to pull off the road and view the color of several mountain ridges lined up one behind the other.



Skiing in the south has become a popular winter sport. Cross country skiing is especially well suited to the Parkway. When the roadway is covered with snow and ice it is closed to cars. However, it is then that conditions are best for winter sports like skiing and sledding.



The quiet beauty of the winter along the Blue Ridge attracts many who only wish to enjoy the snow covered scenery.

SOMETHING TO MANAGE, SOMETHING TO SHARE

As a unit in the National Park System, the Blue Ridge Parkway, by law and by tradition, is obligated to manage all of its resources, natural and cultural, in such a manner as to facilitate their conservation yet permit sharing by millions (nineteen million in 1984 alone).

To achieve this goal a remarkably small number of administrative persons have dedicated their unique talents to designing, constructing and maintaining a national recreational unit without peer in the nation. In fact, over a fifty year span only six men have held the highly prestigious title of "Superintendent, Blue Ridge Parkway": Stanley W. Abbott (Acting, 1937-1944), Sam P. Weems (1944-1966), James M. Eden (1967-1968), Granville B. Liles (1968-1975), Joe Brown (1975-1977), and Gary Everhardt (1977-).

Out of their combined ingenuity came developments which have set recreational standards for the entire nation. Similar achievements have been attained in resource protection and management. And in the process the Parkway has served as a training ground for the National Park Service: its alumni are scattered all over the nation as rangers, interpreters, superintendents, and resource managers. Thusly has the command "MANAGE AND SHARE" been richly implemented on the Parkway.



Gary Everhardt, Superintendent, during the Golden Anniversary celebration, 1985.

SOMETHING OUTSTANDING, SOMETHING PEACEFUL

Thus, for fifty years men like them and untold thousands of co-laborers have uniquely cooperated to produce this great national recreational resource. On their behalf, and of their work, North Carolina's Governor Dan K. Moore made a most fitting tribute: "I hope that it will endure as a monument to all who seek to give North Carolina (Virginia) something of themselves, who lose themselves in her work, and who thereby find their future entwined with hers. From such a union there can come only outstanding progress and achievement." The Blue Ridge Parkway is that MONUMENT.

And as the Parkway ends its first fifty years, surely no eulogy can be more fitting for the occasion than a prayer fervently uttered on its behalf by the Reverend Arsene Thompson, full-blooded Cherokee Indian:



Sam P. Weems, the Parkway's first Superintendent, as he appeared in 1963.

“Where once there was only a buffalo trail, where Indian campfires once blazed... where once the red man and the white man fought... there is a road of peace and we are thankful.”



Reflections seem like a fitting way to reach the end of a publication such as this. We have looked back over fifty years of Blue Ridge Parkway history. But, like the lily pads in Bass Lake, which will return next year, we look forward to future seasons.



Above — Sunsets are year-round treats for those who take a moment to watch the slowly setting sun.

Back cover — Rime ice forms on the landscape when clouds containing super cooled water vapor touch the trees and rocks. This phenomenon occurs with reasonable regularity during the spring and fall months. Though short lived once the sun hits it, rime ice is a treat to see in the bright sun.

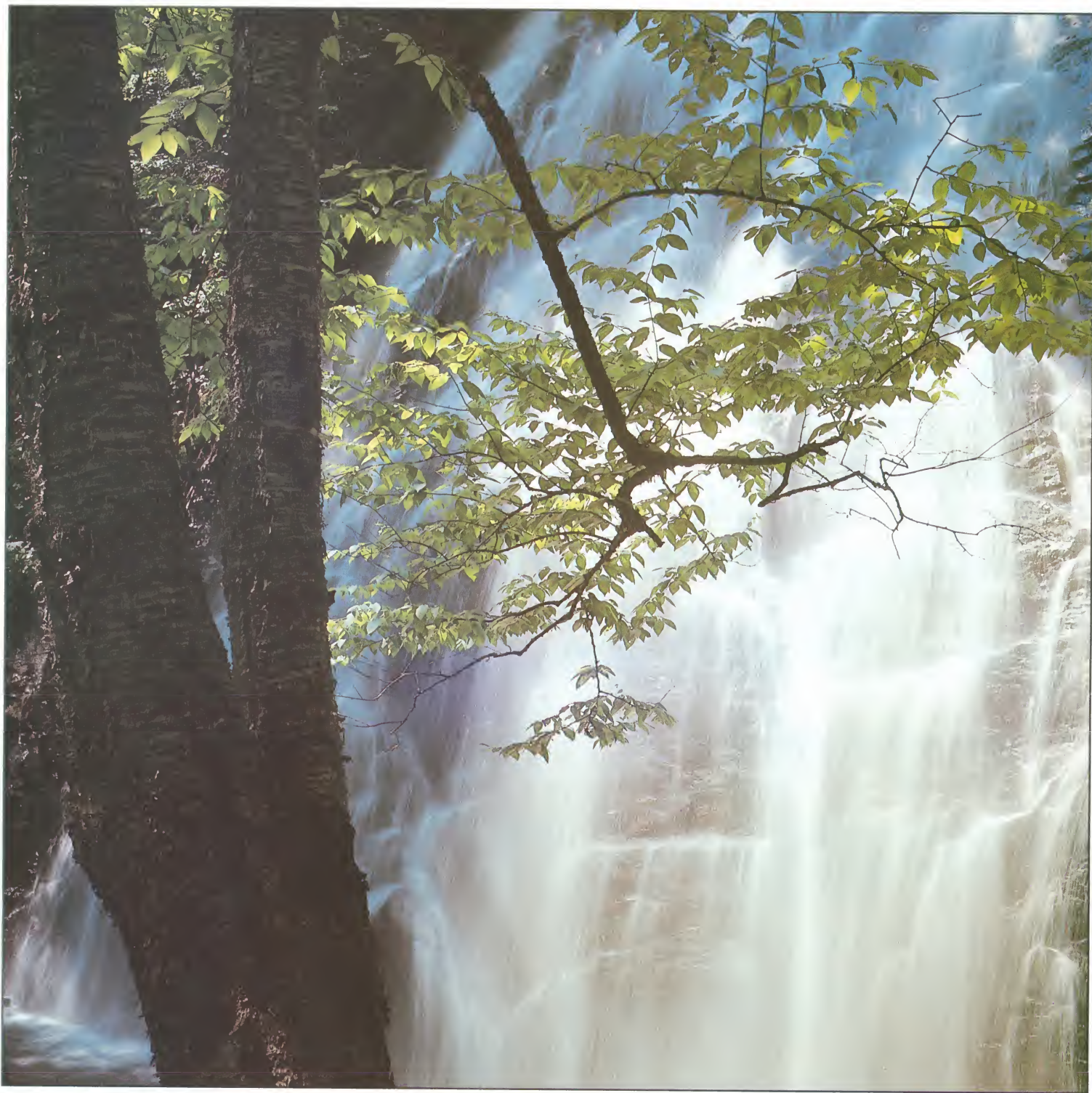


Visitors to the Blue Ridge Parkway find themselves on one of the longest uninterrupted drives in America. The 469 mile long Parkway connects the 105 mile long Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park and the 33 miles of U.S. Highway 441 through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This is one of the few roads in the nation where one can drive at a leisurely pace and enjoy the scenic lands surrounding the roadway.



The Blue Ridge Parkway passes through a varied landscape as it travels south through the states of North Carolina and Virginia. Many natural and man-made wonders pass by the traveler's eye. Among the older and more interesting of the man-made features is the stone work on so many of the Parkway bridges, like the one at Highway 89 in Virginia (above). Man and nature combine to create the beauty of the rolling pastureland and rail fences found in Doughton Park (left) near the state line between Virginia and North Carolina. Further south in the Craggy Gardens (below), near Asheville, North Carolina nature itself holds the traveler in awe.





Not everyone traveling the Parkway does so by motor vehicle, nor is every scene of beauty to be found through the windshield. There are many trails and other features that require short walks or stops to see. The eighty foot fall down a near vertical rock face onto a rubble of small boulders, makes Crabtree Falls one of the most beautiful of waterfalls.

To conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

From the Act of August 25, 1916
establishing the National Park Service.

THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY: THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

"Something borrowed,
Something blue,
Something old,
Something new,
And a penny in your shoe!"

As ridiculously far-fetched as it may sound, the above quoted proverbial verse for a lovely bride on her great nuptial day is also fittingly appropriate as christening verse for the lovely Blue Ridge Parkway on its Golden Anniversary, September 11, 1985.

All the ingredients are there: "Something borrowed" was a consulting landscape architect borrowed from the Winchester County Parks in New York.

"Something blue" was, most obviously, the magnificent range of mountains known as "The Blue Ridge."

"Something old" was quaintly, yet aptly, represented by the grand old remnants of mountain architecture so familiar to Parkway travelers — Mabry Mill, Puckett Cabin, Brinegar Cabin, etc.

"Something new" was the startling proposal to build almost five hundred miles of rural parkway solely dedicated to leisurely motoring — at a time when the entire nation was in the midst of a disastrous depression.

"And a penny in your shoe" came from the federal government in the form of Public Works Administration relief dollars to get the project started as a relief measure.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was indeed, a depression-born project, designed to link the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks and to provide jobs for the unemployed. It, like the bride, has fevered many brains seeking adequate words to portray its seemingly unlimited attributes. Its closest neighbors, with their pragmatic minds aptly labeled it with two simple words — "The Scenic." On the opposite end of the scale a die-hard opponent, a Congressman from Ohio, once, in a huff, peevishly labeled it "the most gigantic and stupendously extravagant and unreasonable expenditure made by the most extravagantly expensive administration in the history of the world."

As a unique rural national parkway, weaving its way through the peaks, lowlands, and high country of the Appalachian Blue Ridge it has, as a world famous commentator said, "Everything, romance, history, excitement, beauty." For almost five hundred miles it conveys the visitor through a remarkable slice of cultural landscape, offers a series of balconies from which to view the constantly changing communities below, and also invites the traveler to park the car and step out into a world of yesteryear, such as that found at Mabry Mill or the farmstead at Humpback Rocks.

For romance and history the Blue Ridge Parkway country offers a never-ending tale. Indians raided along its ridges centuries before European man discovered America. Archeological finds at such places as Peaks of Otter and Humpback Rocks plainly document the fact that the native Americans found the route just as attractive as the modern day visitor. Moreover, Mars, the God of War, has heavily visited the Parkway route, using it as a passageway to battle. Those battles include Indian wars, the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and most recently, the Second World War during which the American soldiers used the Parkway for maneuvers to learn the art of fighting in mountainous country prior to being shipped off to the real battle field.



Early CCC Camp for the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The Parkway has many places ideal for family recreation. Many trails like those at Craggy Gardens, shown here, offer short walks, longer hikes, back packing, and other activities such as photography, flower identification, and bird watching.



On the Parkway, there are plenty of trees and quiet places for the traveler to enjoy either alone or with family and friends. Whether one is looking for a place to be alone and meditate or a place to make new acquaintances, whether a place to rest or a place to play, it can be found here.



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